United Nations E/2010/NGO/80

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 May 2010

Original: English

Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
High-level segment: annual ministerial review: implementing the internationallyagreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Hope for the Nations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-36707 (E) 160610

Please recycle

Statement

Hope for the Nations, in its role as coordinator for the United Nations NGO Informal Regional Network in North America, invited Canadian non-governmental organizations, activists from interested humanitarian organizations and socially engaged youth to participate in a forum and workshop held in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada in April 2010. The topic of discussion was "implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women".

The forum and workshop were held in conjunction with a community-wide "global citizen week". The week featured a variety of events centred around the Millennium Development Goals, including presentations by youth, art exhibits and music concerts, that raised awareness of the Goals and global citizenship within the community at large.

The forum and workshop facilitated communication among the participating Canadian non-governmental organizations and youth and promoted capacity-building in the non-governmental organization community. Delegates listened to presentations given by representatives of various non-governmental organizations on gender equality and empowerment of women (see www.ngonetworks.com), and participants formed working groups to discuss the recommendations to be presented to the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council, on behalf of Canadian civil society. The topic addressed was "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women". The general recommendations that emerged include:

(a) The achievement of equality in educational attainment for females and males at all levels. While universal primary education (Goal 2) for both females and males is critical, parity in educational attainment worldwide is a prerequisite to gender equality and empowerment of women. This education must be inclusive, culturally relevant and holistic, utilizing methodologies that best achieve educational objectives;

(b) The eradication of structural barriers to gender equality and empowerment of women (both formal and informal). Both formal and informal structural barriers that impede gender equality and empowerment of women exist worldwide. These include impediments to education for females, lack of access to health care, poverty, family obligations, the need to work to supplement family income, lack of post-schooling employment opportunities and some Government policies that are specific to women and impede gender equality;

(c) Embracing the principle that gender equality is a fundamental human right. While cultural understandings of gender equality exist, universal equality as a right of all humanity must be respected and embraced;

(d) Ensuring that women have a voice in their communities that is listened to. Gender equality requires that females participate equally in discussions in society. Listening to women's voices is essential for their empowerment;

(e) The examination and appropriate eradication of traditional barriers to the empowerment of women and gender equality. Formal State policies and informal practices in civil society must be culturally relevant and gender-neutral. In some cases, active policies to support women are necessary.